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## OLD-TIME SLUMS OF INDIANAPOLIS.

BY GEORGE S. COTTMAN.

**M**R. J. F. WRIGHT, whose long and intimate connection with the charity work of Indianapolis made him familiar with the "submerged tenth" of the city, has collected into several manuscript books a fund of curious lore than touches that element of the city's population. Included in this information is a long list of slum names that have at one time or another attached to various buildings and localities, illustrative of that strange and oft-times happy slang of which the facile American is so prolific. One notable fact is that such names were much more numerous here at an earlier day than they are now, indicating the moral sanitation which may fairly be said to have taken place in our community. It is said that Indianapolis is to-day, for a city of its size, exceptionally free from slum conditions. Whatever vice flourishes here makes at least a show of hiding its head and not flourishing itself in the more respectable quarters; but it is only of recent years that this boast could be made. A quarter of a century ago open dives could be found in the very heart of the business district, and Mr. Wright's list shows that these were but the overflow of a corruption that had long afflicted the town. A notorious wandering family, well named Ishmael, and an influx of kindred spirits who speedily became bound together not only by common sympathies but by intermarriages, formed at an early day the germs of a social disease not to be soon eliminated, and these slang names are, for the most part, a reflection of that disease.

As early as 1835 the "South Side" was distinguished from the "North Side," Washington street being the dividing line, and this south half of the town was pretty well supplied with grotesquely-dubbed localities. East of East street and south of the Panhandle railroad, peopled largely by Irish, was known as "Irish Hill," and was made notorious by the troublesome and bellicose nature of the residents there. "Vinegar Hill," bounded by South, School and Huron streets, got its acidulous sobriquet from the disposition of its feminine residents to advertise one another's

shortcomings, this abnormal propensity being so strong, it is said, that they even promoted the church militant by praying offensively, each against her sisters, at the prayer meetings. "Vinegar Slip," origin of name unknown, was the south end of Mississippi street, near the rolling mills, and was known to the police as a hiding place for criminals. The strip of ownerless ground along the river back of the Greenlawn Cemetery, which was long used as a public dumping ground, and where people of the poorest class "squatted," patching together grotesque shanties out of old boards, scraps of tin and what not, was christened "Dump-town."

"Dogtown," near the stockyards, was so called from the vast number of dogs that were kept there as a guard against the tramps who infested the place. "Poverty Flats" was between Mississippi street and the river, extending from the Union tracks to Morris street. "Over the Rhine" was over the river from Greenlawn Cemetery. Several tenement houses on West street near Georgia were known as "Holy Row," "The Bowery" was Pearl street east of Alabama, and "Cary's Corner" was a house on Delaware street where Mozart Hall now stands, which half a century or more ago was an abiding place for emigrants and other people of the poorest class. "Happy Hollow" was Helen street, near Kingan's porkhouse, and Virginia avenue was "Lovely Lane," so named thirty years ago by the colored people, who built upon it a meeting house which was labeled "Lovely Lane M. E. Church." The unconscious irony in this naming will be obvious to any one who remembers the horrible depths of muck and batter that pre-eminently distinguished Virginia avenue before it was asphalted.

Along Washington street were "Barbers' Row," near Blackford; Steven's "Colonnade," "Stringtown," across the White river bridge, so called because of the way the houses strung out on both sides of the way, and "Slabtown," west of Mt. Jackson. "Greasy Row" was the square opposite the courthouse.

A particularly unsavory part of town was a strip of territory lying along or contiguous to the canal. The "Yellow Bridge," originally painted that color is to the present day regarded as the

gateway to "Bucktown." "Long Branch," which stood on the bank of the classic ditch, was a house well known by name throughout the town, and the fame of it was decidedly ill; and the "Park House," of kindred reputation in its day, also stood on the canal, near Military Park. "Sleight," a liquor joint frequented by toughs, stood near the canal at Eighth street, and just over the ditch, which was facetiously dubbed "the St. Lawrence," was a similar dive called "Canada." "Chism's Fence," at the corner of North and Blackford streets, a resort for the lowest class of blacks and whites, was kept after the war by a son of infamy named Bob Chism, and a brother in iniquity, Rollo House, was the proprietor of a shanty built on piles near the pesthouse, known in criminal circles as "The Crib." "The Nest," in the same locality, was a similar den. "Lindenbower Station," a cottage in an alley north of old Fourth street and west of Mississippi was, prior to 1878, also a notorious pest hole. Not far from this place was "Hoplight Station," an alley corner, so called because the beaux and belles of the neighborhood used to congregate there and dance of moonlight nights. To prove still farther that these were not devoid of poetry and sentiment, a prosaic and presumably dirty alley, not far off, became "Lovers' Lane." A tenement row on Court street near Blackford was known in 1877 as "The Dirty Dozen," because from these there issued daily just twelve dirty looking girls who went to work at Kingan's.

In other parts of the town "Wall street" was the north side of Market street where the Terminal Station now stands, but then occupied by negro gambling dens; "Rag alley" was Columbia alley from Ohio to Michigan streets, and "Cockroach row" was a block on Massachusetts avenue not far from Pennsylvania street. "The Met," "Crone's," "Atlantic Garden," "The Zoo" and "The Adelphi" were low theaters which, at various periods, contributed their mites to the demoralization of the city. "Dogberry Row" designated the dens of "justice" scattered about Court and Delaware streets near the courthouse, which, about 1882 were infamous for robberies under cloak of the law. People too poor and ignorant to help themselves were brought into these justice of the peace courts on trumped-up charges and always fined, the

scheme being to secure costs. Blackmail was levied on houses of ill-fame, which paid weekly sums to prevent raid, and cases were often tried by night to avoid publicity and newspaper exposure. The constables are said to have all been criminals, though why this charge should be confined to the constables is not apparent. One other notable colony that belongs to this lovely list was "Brickville." "Brickville" forty years ago occupied a stretch of territory from Woodruff Place east to the Center township line, and from Clifford avenue to the National road. It was so named from numerous brickyards located there, and the "colony" was made up of the brickmakers, a hard set, many of them Kentuckians, who were a law unto themselves and as defiant as they dared be of the powers that were—except in the stringent winter seasons when, like the untameable red man, they would bury the hatchet and come in to the government agent—i. e., the township trustee, to be fed. Their little kingdom was so overrun with dogs it required considerable courage in an officer of the law to venture among them. One man kept no less than thirty large, savage sheep-killing brutes, and no one knows of him ever having paid any tax. A case that came into court illustrates the moral status of these people. A man, being offended at his step child one cold night picked it up by the ankle and hurled it over the yard fence, breaking its arm. The mother approved the act. The child, afraid to return to the house, sought to keep warm by huddling close to a calf lying in some straw. Finally a next door neighbor came out and got the little outcast because, as he explained apologetically in court, "he hated to hear it cry and thought he'd take it in."

These Brickvillians had a social life all their own, and Mr. Wright describes the typical Brickville dandy as a compound of brilliant colors with red, blue and yellow stripes in his trousers, a red undershirt crossed with bright hued suspenders, and a gaudy neckerchief, with cowhide boots upon his feet and a broad-brimmed brown hat surmounting all.

"Brickville," by the removal and dispersion of the brickyards, has long since ceased to exist as a "center of population," and most of the people who are now familiar with that ground know nothing of the vanished race that once flourished there.